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ABSTRACT

Despite sharing a common history and purpose, the National Conference for Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) have operated in different ways. Whereas NCPEA's approach was always egalitarian and tied to a policy of individual membership, UCEA was organized more formally and followed a more restricted institutional membership policy. Although both approaches have merit and are complementary, the two associations have grown apart over the years. There are two causes for the bad feelings between the organizations: (1) disagreement over research/theory emphases; and (2) loss of mission, accompanied by financial difficulties and declining membership. Without a mission, the two associations were in no position to provide leadership and leverage against the inherent weaknesses of the colleges and universities housing them. At one extreme, some educational programs became "cash cows" devoid of academic standards. In other instances, slavish imitation of arts and sciences approaches made the educational administration program irrelevant to the practice of managing schools. In response to recent national directives to improve administrator preparation programs, the NCPEA and the UCEA could collaborate to bring about reform. A modest reform agenda is proposed to establish voluntary standards for recruiting and screening preservice candidates; reestablish full-time study as the norm; and commit to establishing full-time faculty consisting of both scholars and recently experienced clinical professors. (Five references) (MLH)

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NCPEA - UCEA:
Converging Missions

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Today I will talk about both of our associations, how we are alike, how we are different, how we might emphasize our common interests and capitalize on our differences. Most importantly, I will call for a restoration of our common mission and issue a modest proposal for cooperative action.

History links the National Conference for Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA, now the National Council) and The University Council for Educational Administration as few other organizations are linked. In fact, NCPEA can rightly be called the progenitor of UCEA. The parent, as you know, was founded in 1947, when Walter Cocking gathered fifty-six professors and practitioners of educational administration at IBM in Endicott, New York to hold conversations about the nature of the field (Campbell, Fleming, Newell, and Bennion, 1987). Over the years, NCPEA has taken pride in its image as what has been described "an informal, constantly changing nonorganization of professors of educational administration" (Saxe, 1980, p. 111). Despite its avowed informal approach, Roald Campbell observed that NCPEA created "a network through which new ideas concerning preparatory programs were generated and disseminated" (Campbell, 1987, p. 180). The primary activity undertaken annually by NCPEA in its early years was and continues to be a unique approach among professional associations. Saxe has referred to that approach as an "annual conference combined with a family vacation" (Saxe, p. 111). Especially in its early years, NCPEA contributed significantly to knowledge about schools and school administration (Saxe, pp. 111-114).

Nine year later, through the efforts of the same dynamic generation of strong personalities, UCEA was shaped by the institutions hosting regional centers for the Kellogg supported Cooperative Project in Educational Administration, namely, Peabody, Harvard, Ohio State, Stanford, Teachers College, Chicago, Oregon, Texas, and Alberta. Interestingly, it was NCPEA that had played a significant role in securing Kellogg funding for the Cooperative Project (Campbell, 1987, p. 181), which ultimately resulted in the formation of the University

Council. And again, it was Walter Cocking who proved to be a fearless advocate of the formation of a consortium of universities at the November, 1956 meeting held at Teachers College, when he outlined the benefits of the proposed organization (Report of the Cooperative Center for Educational Administration Exploratory Conference, 1956, p. 8).

The common mission of all of these forces (NCPEA, CPEA, and UCEA) in the early days of organized educational administration was the improvement of administrator preparation. There was an intense commitment by the founders of these three movements to create a competent and dynamic professoriate and a significant and relevant body of knowledge to serve as a basis for the practice and study of school administration.

Although sharing a common history and purpose, NCPEA and UCEA went about their business in different ways. NCPEA's approach was always egalitarian and tied to its policy of individual membership. UCEA, on the other hand, followed a path of institutional membership and, consistent with the enabling funding proposal developed by CPEA, was more formally organized with a restricted membership. As Hollis Moore described, "Membership was to consist not of persons but of universities, those institutions quite clearly leaders in the field of preparing school administrators" (Moore, p. 29). Campbell has reflected on some of the negative consequences of this approach, saying that, while it may have served "well those whose institutions belonged to the organization, probably [it] constituted a mixed blessing for the field" (Campbell, p. 183).

However, it can be argued convincingly that both of these approaches have merit and are, in fact, complementary. Given the common mission of these two associations, there is nothing incongruous about professors of a given institution belonging to NCPEA while holding simultaneous institutional membership in UCEA. In fact, there is at least one example of an individual having served as president of both associations. There are many examples of activist personalities who have played important roles in both. But, the two associations have grown apart over the years. In recent years the relationship between

UCEA and NCPEA has often been surrounded by suspicion and bad feeling. I think there are at least two causes of this unfortunate state of affairs.

First, the nature of the academic institutions in which UCEA programs have been housed has caused them to evolve into quite distinct programs. The typical UCEA program, seeking legitimacy within the context of a research university, has imitated the social sciences in its program requirements, instructional approaches, faculty priorities and in numerous other ways. The arts and sciences approach was adopted by these programs, despite the fact that preparing people to do social scientific research is not terribly relevant to practicing school administration. Over the years, this approach has alienated many of these programs from their students and the profession they aspire to serve. At its founding, UCEA universities prepared a major portion of school administrators. At least partly in response to insensitivity and irrelevance, this is no longer the case.

Increasingly the membership of NCPEA has been professors from institutions with a more regional mission. The environment and values of these institutions have affected the educational administration programs housed within them, just as research universities have visibly affected the programs they house. While the affects of these distinct academic institutions on educational administration are both positive and negative, it can certainly be argued that the regional university programs have stayed closer to the profession they serve and have been more responsive to the needs of practitioners. But, the point I wish to make here is that the nature of the host institutions has caused UCEA and NCPEA programs to view their common mission differently, and certainly to use different means to accomplish their mission. Furthermore, through the bitter competition for students and resources, they have often come to disdain the other's approach and enshrine their own.

A second cause of bad feeling between these two associations has to do with the extent to which both NCPEA and UCEA have strayed from their common, lofty mission. Financially strapped UCEA, suffering from

a total lack of external funding and reduced membership, substituted its own survival for advocacy of program improvement. In the early 80s, it could accurately be said of UCEA that it was an institution existing mainly in the affections of an aging professoriate. There were years in which UCEA had no visible program, while consuming its limited endowment at a rapid pace. There were years in which the consortium did nothing to challenge its membership, possibly out of fear of offending and losing its only source of revenue. My view is that NCPEA also became ineffectual, substituting a social purpose for its original commitment to stimulating an ongoing conversation about excellence. Its membership also dwindled, as the great educational administration personalities died off or retired.

Having lost site of their mission through institutional evolution and difficult financial times, these two associations were in no position to provide leadership and leverage against the inherent weaknesses of the colleges and universities that housed them. Consequently, some educational administration programs were turned into cash cows. Standards were abandoned as market share determined both content and delivery format. In other instances, slavish imitation of arts and sciences approaches made the educational administration program irrelevant to the practice of school administration. The worst of one group pandered to the graduate schools of arts and sciences, moving farther and farther from the problems of administrative practice they pretended to study. The worst of the other group pandered to dumb and lazy students, finally making themselves indistinguishable from correspondence programs touted on matchbook covers.

In March, 1987, the first effort in recent history, to call for reform of educational administration was released, *Leaders for America's Schools, the Report of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration* (1987). In effect, the report's authors said administrator preparation is a nearly sacred function and therefore, it must be wrested from the clutches of those who pander to the trappings of science or foolery. That report, and the subsequent report of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration, are efforts to

reverse the cycle of accommodation that has left educational administration programs bereft of adequate resources and without a defensible knowledge base. These reports call on us to reinstate standards.

Fortuitously, it appears that during the last several years, both NCPEA and UCEA have been revitalized. Both have reaffirmed their common mission, the improvement of educational administration preparation programs. We can also reaffirm our distinct and traditional methods, viewing them as alternative ways of improving our profession. The separate associations, one elitist and institutional, one egalitarian and individual, can keep each other honest by pointing to the weaknesses the other is prone to.

NCPEA may point to the arrogance and puffery of UCEA member universities, to instances where research mission is hostile to practitioner preparation, to program irrelevance, to false claims of rigor, to inflexible and blind adherence to the ways of arts and sciences approaches. UCEA may point to the provincialism, and false claims of relevance made by some NCPEA professors about their programs. What is clear is that the worst administrator preparation programs, regardless of their affiliation, should be eliminated because they cannot or will not transform themselves into agencies for the serious preparation of administration practitioners Furthermore, all of the programs affiliated with both associations are in need of significant reform.

In May, 1989, The National Policy Board for Educational Administration issued an agenda for reform titled *Improving the Preparation of School Administrators*. It was a unique event, in that this agenda was unanimously endorsed by the National Policy Board, whose members are the executive directors and presidents of AACTE, AASA, ASCD, ASBO, Council of Chief State School Officers, NAESP, NASSP, NCPEA, NSBA, and UCEA. The profession's leadership, acting together for the first time since its fragmentation many years ago, endorsed a specific vision of excellence and a reform agenda for administrator preparation. Although there are many within the Policy Board's member associations who disagree with some of the recommendations, the Policy Board itself

has courageously held to its agenda, wisely recognizing that the purpose of such a document is not to list those things on which all can agree, but rather to push at the horizons of excellence.

Just as it behooves the professional associations involved in educational administration to work together to solve some of their problems through the strength of unity, so it would seem especially useful for NCPEA and UCEA to collaborate in order to bring about reform. With this in mind, I propose an initial and modest agenda of reform which might be addressed by a single or several joint task forces of UCEA and NCPEA. Acting together, these two associations can be a powerful force for reform. These items are drawn directly from the National Policy Board report and they are consistent with our common mission of improving administrator preparation programs.

1) **Establish voluntary standards and procedures for recruiting and screening pre-service candidates** for administrator preparation. The purpose of the standards and procedures would be to attract promising candidates while holding ethnic diversity, intelligence, and character as simultaneous requirements. Programs would be called on to devote legitimate resources to this effort, such as a half-time faculty appointment. Educational administration must join in the competition with the other professions for bright and dedicated candidates. It takes resources to compete, it is not part of our tradition, but we owe it to future generations of children, and ourselves, to ferret out the brightest and most talented people we can find, and convince them of the importance of school administration.

There are thorny issues here, no question. Does "bright" guarantee administrative potential? Of course not! But common sense says it is a better bet than "dull." Does literacy or facility with language guarantee leadership quality? No! But who will claim the converse? It is time to put aside our excuses and come to some agreement on sensible approaches to recruitment and screening. No system will be perfect and no system should be inflexible; but these are not good arguments for open enrollment. In this country we don't let everyone fly an airplane. How much more caution should we use in our licensing of school leaders

whose competence and character will affect the education and lives of generations of our citizens?

There is no reason a joint NCPEA-UCEA task force cannot produce a set of admissions and recruitment standards within a year, or that we cannot voluntarily commit our institutions to meet or exceed those standards at our annual meetings this year, Gresham's law be damned.

2) **Re-establish full-time study as the norm**, rather than the exception, by building a system of financial support and a set of normative expectations about the seriousness and importance of school administration.

There is nothing so effective in revitalizing the energies of tired professors than a cluster of eager, bright, and demanding graduate students. Many programs are in serious need of revitalization. There are sad educational administration office suites at universities across the country. Once vital and bustling places, they are now inhabited by a few, fading professors, no graduate students, few if any secretaries, and no services. This is hardly the environment in which to prepare school leaders of tomorrow.

If we put our minds to it, we can devise the political, legislative, and business-partnership models necessary to muster support for the full-time study of educational administration. I am not asking that the study of school administration be full-time only. I am suggesting that, for the health of our programs, faculty, and profession, we make certain that most qualified individuals who wish to, will have the opportunity to study full-time. Surely, with a little work, we can commit our institutions to putting together support packages attractive enough so that each of our programs has at least ten full-time graduate students in school administration. And, we can do this within two years.

3) **Commit to the establishment of a full-time faculty** (consisting of scholars, as well as recently experienced clinical professors) whose professional energies and interests are directed solely at having a rigorous and relevant administrator preparation program.

Professional preparation programs require updating and vigilance on the part of those who provide them. In order to adequately

induct and socialize candidates into educational administration, the program must build a culture, an environment in which values, skills, as well as knowledge are imparted. Monitoring the quality of a preparation program should be the full-time work of a group of professors who are not employed elsewhere in the university as unrelated center directors, administrators, department chairs, or as school administrators. In addition to the full-time faculty, half-time school administrators and university administrators might play an integral role in filling out the faculty roster. But an effective program requires a minimal full-time faculty to faithfully provide preparation for school administration. Can those of us who provide administrator preparation commit ourselves and our institutions to supporting those programs with an adequate full-time faculty?

These three proposals are modest, but, I believe they would greatly improve administrator preparation programs, regardless of the kind of institution in which they are housed. Action on these items will, I believe, have beneficial effects on the energy levels, self-confidence and pride of our profession and those who generously serve by preparing school administrators.

I have called this talk "Converging Missions," but that is really not a very accurate description of the missions of UCEA and NCPEA. In truth, our missions have always been one and the same; we only strayed from the path, buffeted by a rapidly changing world, organizational drift, and declining resources. These are not times to be defensive because we are criticized. These are times of great opportunity, because we know a great deal more about how to build a relevant and rigorous program for preparing school leaders than we did thirty-five years ago when we were captivated and energized by the theory movement. The possibilities for creating professional preparation of the highest quality are great. I believe that, together, NCPEA and UCEA can again energize a new generation of professors to make reality of possibility. In the name of UCEA, I offer to you warm wishes, encouragement, and a spirit of cooperation. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to you.

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